

The Church: The Gospel Made Visible (Part 3)

Responding to Opposition as Christians

Romans 12:17-21

Sunday, June 21, 2020

Introduction

This is our third and final week of considering a section of commands in Romans 12 with this in mind: that God intends to use His church, and our presence in this world, as a means of revealing His character and the power of the Gospel. We must speak the Gospel, but we also have the opportunity to live in a way that makes the power of the Gospel visible to a watching world.

As we come to this final section Paul helps us consider how we as Christians should respond to those who come against us.

- How do we respond when we are slandered?
- How do we react when we are mistreated?

In verses 17-21 Paul unpacks how we should and how we should not respond to those who oppose us, those who are our enemies. And the summation of his commands comes in verse 21: *we should not be overcome with evil, but we are to overcome evil with good.*

Context – Romans 12

- **The structure of Romans** – In Romans 1-11 Paul provides a full explanation of the Gospel. He explains our sin condition, how salvation is accomplished and how it is applied. After this foundation is laid, in Romans 12 he begins to explain (in very practical ways) the way those who have been changed by the Gospel should live.
- **Romans 12:9-21** – At first read these verses may appear simply to be a long list of commands – but there is a progression. Paul begins with a focus on relationships within the church and then moves out to include our relationships with those outside of the church – particularly opponents. In addition, the first command of verse 9 (let love be genuine) is the primary command and all of the rest flow out of it.

The Gospel is made Visible as we Respond Rightly to Opposition

- **How not to respond to opposition – Don't be overcome with evil**
 - When we are overcome with evil we will seek to repay evil for evil (vs. 17a)
 - Matthew 5:38-44; Romans 12:14; Proverbs 20:22; 1 Thessalonians 5:15; 1 Peter 3:8-9
 - When we are overcome with evil we will seek to avenge ourselves (vs. 19)
 - To seek to avenge ourselves is to usurp the place of God and to show a failure of trust in His promises of justice (2 Thessalonians 1:6-10; Deuteronomy 32:35-43)
- **How to respond to opposition – Overcome evil with good**
 - We overcome evil when we do good in the sight of all (vs. 17b)
 - 1 Peter 2:11-17
 - We overcome evil when we live peaceably with all (vs. 18)
 - 2 Corinthians 13:11; Romans 12:9-10
 - We overcome evil when we show genuine, tangible love toward our enemies (vs. 20)
 - Burning coals - As we show genuine, tangible love toward our enemies it may bring them shame, remorse and guilt that God can use to lead them to repentance.